

# FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMAND

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In Mark 12:30, Jesus taught, *“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”* According to this teaching, there are three major parts to our inward man (collectively referred to as the spirit in verses such as Hebrews 4:12 and James 2:26). Other scriptures teach us how each of these three parts (the heart, soul and mind), are related to loving God as Jesus taught in this “first commandment.”

## **The Soul**

“Soul” is a term God uses to describe what is us, who we are (1 Pet 3:20). “Soul” identifies who we are, regardless of what our heart and mind is like. It is the most basic part of us. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word “lebab” includes both the mind and heart together. The scripture Jesus quoted in Mark 12:30 is Deuteronomy 6:5. The word “lebab” is translated there as “heart” in the King James Version. In the New Testament, there are separate words for “heart” and “mind.” The Holy Spirit used two Greek words (one for “heart” and one for “mind”) to translate the single Hebrew word “lebab.” The word “soul” identifies Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4:16,34). Nebuchadnezzar’s “lebab” (his heart and mind) was taken from him. But he was still “Nebuchadnezzar.” He was able to learn his lesson. When Nebuchadnezzar’s “lebab” (heart and mind) was taken from him, it was the soul that was left that still identified him as Nebuchadnezzar. To be converted, the soul must first turn to God. In Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion, his soul had to be what was first converted, which learned that God rules in the kingdoms of men and began to extol God (Dan 4:25-26,34-37). The soul must first love the truth of God in order for conversion to take place (2 Thes 2:10-12). Otherwise, God will send a strong delusion to prevent the conversion of someone who rejects Him (see also John 12:40). However, if our soul loves the truth of God, then He will give us repentance (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim 2:25). We cannot change our mind (and thus our heart) if our soul does not first love the truth. In turning to God, the soul must “hate” itself (“life” is the Greek word for “soul” in Luke 14:26) as a master (see also Luke 16:13). Like Lot, we need to have a “righteous soul” that is vexed in the presence of wickedness

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(continued)

(2 Pet 2:8).

## **The Mind**

The mind is the location of our will, which is what we are determined to do (Rom 7:15-25). In Romans 7:15-25, Paul's will (the Greek word "*thelo*" means "to determine") was to only and always do the will of God (Rom 7:21-22). This will to do God's will was the law of Paul's mind (Rom 7:21-23,25), which is the new mind that we must have to become a Christian. This is the very meaning of repentance (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:20). Before becoming a Christian, the mind, our will, is to do our own will (Eph 2:1-3; Col 1:21; 1 Pet 1:13-14). Now, as a Christian, our will is to do only God's will, and all of God's will (John 7:17). There is certainly no way that we will do God's will until we first have the determination to do His will.

## **The Heart**

The spiritual heart is the source of what we actually think, say and do (Prov 4:23; Matt 12:34-35; 15:16-20; Mark 7:18-23). As with Paul, even with our determination to only do God's will, we sometimes may behave contrary to what our mind is. Paul's problem in Romans 7:15-25 was his flesh. But the flesh does according to what is in the heart (Mark 7:18-23). Therefore, in order to actually do according to our new mind, we need the evil purged out of our hearts (Acts 15:9). It is the evil that is in the heart that causes us to think, say, and do evil things. When that evil is purged out, then we are prepared to do according to the good that has been formed in the heart (Matt 12:35). That is the process of spiritual growth. But for that transformation of our heart (and thus our actions) to take place, we first must have the will to do it (Rom 12:2). From this, we can see that our flesh follows what is in our heart, our heart is transformed by what our mind is, and our mind follows the direction of our soul. It is a growth process to fulfill the great commandment, to love God with *all* the heart, soul and mind (Matt 22:37-38; Mark 12:29-30). That is why God is working in Christians both to will (having the right mind) and to do (having the right heart) His good pleasure (Php 2:13). Christians by definition must already love God with their inner man, but God is working in us to love Him with *all* of our soul, mind, and heart.